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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 19 April 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

19 April 1998

I have the honour to address you with reference to the speech delivered by Mr. Pascal Milo, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania, at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights, on 15 April 1998.

As usual, the speech contains already known, concocted allegations against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, thus reflecting the constantly pursued policy of interference into the internal affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, conducive to further extend ethnic Albanian separatism in Kosovo and Metohija, an integral part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Behind his concern about the alleged violations of human rights of ethnic Albanians in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr. Milo endeavours to conceal the true substance of Albania's policy and aspirations towards my country, which since recently have assumed the contours of open support for terrorists, aiming at secession of a segment of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its accession to Albania. Blaming Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for alleged non-respect of minority rights is, indeed,

sheer cynicism, since it is widely known that the authorities of Albania do not recognize any rights to minorities living in Albania (among these, to the non-negligible Serbian and Montenegrin minorities) in its enforcing the policy of brutal assimilation.

In the context of its overt territorial aspirations vis-a-vis the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, Albania is carrying out certain activities which bring into jeopardy the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia and their territorial integrity. In accordance with this approach, which is pure continuation of the politics pursued by its preceding autocratic regimes, in contravention of all norms of international law, Albania has been and continues to be the only country worldwide which has recognized the non-existent "Republic of Kosovo".

Concurrently with organizing a large-scale anti-Serbian and anti-Yugoslav campaign, the Albanian authorities are providing refuge and arms for terrorist groups which undergo military training on its territory for the bloody terrorist attacks in the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

At the same time, the Albanian side, in a desire to incite broader regional instability and tensions, has been provoking a series of border incidents, thus continuously infringing the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The latest one occurred on 16 April 1998, when a group of terrorists attempted to carry into Kosovo and Metohija a large quantity of arms and ammunition.

Albania's pursuing its policy of open interference into internal affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia and its direct encouragement of terrorism, is endangering the stability of the whole region, with possible unforeseeable consequences.

It is well-known that Kosovo and Metohija has been the cradle of the Serbian statehood and spirituality and an integral part of Serbia for thirteen centuries, long before any evidence of an Albanian State was there in the territory of the present-day Republic of Albania. The said region has never been the territory of any other State.

Apart from Serbs, Montenegrins and ethnic Albanians, members of other minorities and ethnic communities, such as Muslims (over 150,000), Roma (150,000), Turks, Croats, and others, have been living in Kosovo and Metohija. They all benefit from their rights without any problems, as stipulated by the Constitution and laws, as indeed do the members of other minorities in other parts of Serbia - the Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian and others.

All these rights are stipulated in compliance with the highest European standards, including those of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe.

Whereas all other citizens of the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia make effective use of their rights, a large segment of ethnic Albanians, under pressure, blackmailed by their separatist representatives, are boycotting one segment of such rights, while making use

of some other entitlements. For instance, while boycotting general and local elections, the census (since they keep arbitrarily enhancing the number of ethnic Albanians for propaganda purposes) and political institutions, they profit from their right to work, to private property, pensions, social benefits, the trade union and political organization, passports, freedom of movement, private enterprise, etc. The fact that over 50 privately-owned dailies, weeklies and periodicals, with an aggregate circulation of over 2.5 million copies, are published in Kosovo and Metohija, is telling proof of their exercising the right to information in their mother tongue - the Albanian language.

Thus, the remark made by Mr. Milo about the authorities of Kosovo and Metohija establishing an "ethnic apartheid" is, to say the least, frivolous. If self-imposed isolation of a segment of ethnic Albanians under the pressure of their extremist leaders could at all be described as such, the leaders of their political parties and a segment of ethnic Albanians who fail or are reluctant to oppose them, are exclusive culprits.

Individual ethnic Albanian political parties' leaders - the parties which Mr. Milo claims to be non-existent - are persistent in their efforts aimed at secession of Kosovo and Metohija at any price. The measures taken by the authorities of the Republic of Serbia stem exclusively from the legitimate right of every State to combat terrorism, to protect the safety of all its citizens, the public order and property. Since these measures are identical to those taken by any other country when it comes to terrorism, it is sheer nonsense to interpret them as violation or repression against anyone, let alone the civil population.

Since terrorism is a global scourge, we expect the international community and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to resolutely condemn it as an inadmissible method for achieving political objectives and to vehemently urge the leaders of ethnic Albanians to follow suite.

Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have nothing to hide in Kosovo and Metohija. The diplomatic representatives accredited in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have free access to Kosovo and Metohija, whereas no restrictions are imposed upon the representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and a series of international non-governmental humanitarian organizations active in Kosovo and Metohija.

As far as the readiness of the Government of the Republic of Serbia for dialogue and for settling of all vital issues in Kosovo and Metohija by political and democratic means is concerned, I wish to underscore the following:

An agreement on the normalization of education in Kosovo and Metohija was signed recently. All elementary and high schools for ethnic Albanians operate normally. The Albanian students' education process, which implies the normalization of education in Kosovo and Metohija, is being resumed. The Institute of Albanology, unique of its kind in Southeastern Europe, is operating.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia is willing and capable to resolve all outstanding problems together with the representatives of ethnic Albanian political parties, along with other minorities there - the Muslim, Roma, Turkish, Croatian, through direct and unconditional dialogue. To this end, as of 10 March 1998, on several occasions already, it has issued invitations for dialogue to the representatives of the political parties of the Albanian and other national minorities and ethnic groups. His Excellency Mr. Milan Milutinovic, the President of the Republic of Serbia, in his declaration of 18 March 1998, appealed for an immediate and unconditional dialogue, while assuming the role of guarantor of the dialogue. The President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, His Excellency Mr. Slobodan Milosevic, is unreservedly supporting this process and he has appointed a Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Government as his personal envoy in the dialogue.

Mr. Milan Milutinovic, the President of Serbia, went himself to Pristina on 7 April in order to take part in the initial dialogue, but the representatives of ethnic Albanian political parties failed to show up. Upon which the Government of Serbia urged its delegation appointed for negotiations to embark, together with all interested representatives of national minorities in Kosovo and Metohija, upon considering the principles for elaborating a draft statute for Kosovo and Metohija, offering a framework for its autonomy and local self-rule, to be submitted to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia for consideration.

All the proposals and initiatives of the Government of Serbia are founded on European and international standards, in particular on the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe, the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter on Local Self-Government. Along these foundations, the President and the Government of the Republic of Serbia keep appealing to ethnic Albanian political parties' leaders for starting a dialogue.

From the very beginning, the representatives of all other minorities and ethnic groups living in Kosovo and Metohija have responded positively, with the exception of ethnic Albanian political parties' leaders. By their turning a deaf ear to these appeals, they are virtually blocking any dialogue, in an effort to obstruct it and to have an alibi for the unprincipled pressures exerted on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Serbia.

In view of the above, it is to be concluded that the sole tangible problem in Kosovo and Metohija is the Albanian separatists' secessionism, their nationalist extremism, their persisting on setting up a second Albanian State at the expense of their own State of Serbia. The fact is that never since the Sudeten crisis of 1938 has Europe witnessed such aggressive and disloyal attitude on the side of a national minority, such massive and severe abuse of the rights of a national minority for separatist purposes.

In conclusion, I would like to point that Kosovo and Metohija is an integral part of Serbia, that all the problems directly or indirectly linked to the present situation in this southern Serbian province shall be resolved by political means, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, while observing the prevailing European and international standards.

I would ask you, Excellency, kindly to acquaint all the members of the Commission with the contents of this letter and to have it published as an official document of the fifty-fourth session, under agenda item 10.

(Signed) Mr. Miroslav Milošević
Chargé d'affaires a.i.